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ABSTRACT

To effectively study the political, socioeconomic, and cultural effects of the media, it is important to examine the context of the community in which the media operates. To do this, students must think critically and develop a historical perspective of the changing role of each media within this community. The term community is used in the broadest sense to define both geographical and historical location. Most students are not aware of the long historical development that dramatically altered the content of the media and the dramatic audience demographic changes over time. An assignment in a Mass Media and Society class requires students to examine and compare their parents', grandparents', and their own use of the radio. The radio was selected because it is used, but used differently, by all three audiences. Students must compare parents' and grandparents' attitudes and use of the media as child/consumers and later, parent/consumers. The influence parental behavior may have on the students' own use of media is also examined. This exercise allows students to see how dramatically radio has changed in our culture over the decades. (Assignment and template are appended.) (CR)

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ED 393 132

GETTING IN TOUCH WITH THE PAST AND HOW IT AFFECTS THE PRESENT

The External Perspective: An Examination of Applications for the Mass Communication Course

An Overview of the Philosophy Regarding Critical Thinking Skills: Within, Among, Across, and Outside the Communication Curriculum

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Community, Critical Thinking, and Communication

RATIONALE:

Out of a concern that students are not prepared to think critically, thus unprepared to meet the complexities of our global challenge, our department created a "community based" approach that develops critical thinking skills within, among, across, and outside the communication curriculum. This brief paper describes an approach for utilization of "non-community" resources in cognitive development in a mass communication course.

PROBLEM:

To effectively study the political, socioeconomic, and cultural effects of the media it is important to examine the context of the "community" in which the media operates. The term "community" is used in the broadest sense to define both geographical and historical location. Many students are not prepared to think critically, and are thus not prepared to examine and meet the global challenges of society. Thus, there is a need to establish critical thinking skills within and outside the communication curriculum.

To permit students to effectively apply critical thinking skills and evaluate the changing role of media in today's culture, they must develop a historical perspective of the changing role of each media within this "community." Herein lies the problem - for many students the term history immediately implies a boring list of names and dates that have no significance. This student project provides a humanistic, critical thinking approach to this dilemma.

SOLUTION:

To provide a more comprehensive evaluation of the ever changing role of various media, students need to be aware of their very narrow perspective on media and culture. Student experience with media events before their lifetime is limited and makes it difficult for them to conceptualize (and perhaps unrealistic of instructors to expect), and synthesize a thorough understanding of the complexity of the interaction among a culture, a media business, and an audience over an extended period of time.

First, a student rarely considers current media as anything more than a form of entertainment. Few have ever considered the decisions made by a media business regarding the economic issues of this "entertainment." Most students are not aware of the long historical development that dramatically altered the content of the media and the dramatic audience demographic changes over time.

To overcome this egocentric view of media, the following assignment in a Mass Media and Society class requires a student to examine the development and impact of the media by interviewing members of their "community." Specifically, students examine their parents', grandparents', and their own use of radio.

The radio media was selected for this exercise because it is the media that all three audiences traditionally use extensively, and as results have borne out, used differently. The assignment requires a student to examine each generation's use of the radio and their parents' views of the media. Thus, a student conducts a historical research approach to four generations' use of radio in a family. This multi generation examination permits a student to evaluate the socioeconomic and cultural implications of a generation's use of the radio over time - a quasi longitudinal study of the media. In effect, this exercise becomes a multi cultural experience. The composition of a class will affect the many socioeconomic and cultural elements available for class discussion regarding patterns of use and availability of the medium from ethnic, racial, religious, economic, and geographic perspectives, The attached template allows students to collect and analyze some of this material.

If a student follows the assignment faithfully, he/she must reflect on their great-grandparents' attitude about the media. A student must examine their grandparents' use of the media both as a child/consumer, and later as a parent/consumer of the media. A student uses this information to compare parents' attitude and use of the media both as a child/consumer, and later as a parent/consumer of the media. Ultimately, a student reflects on the influence this parental behavior may have on their own use of media. Finally, a student should be able to critically examine the historical development of a media, its impact on a society, the societies' impact on the media, and how the media and audience change over a period of time. Student reports reflect significant insights regarding informative, persuasive, and economic issues effecting the media. This exercise allows a student to see how dramatically radio has changed in our culture over the decades.

Radio Utilization Through the Decades

	Grandparents	Parents	Self
Economic Impact			
Parental Attitude			
Accessibility to Medium			
Programming Content			
Cultural/Ethnic Discoveries			
Gender Differences			
Uses and Gratifications			

COMM. 251
JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT

Due date: _____

"Getting in touch with the past and how it affects the present!"

I would like you to interview a person(s) that grew up listening to radio. Someone who listened to radio before there was TV. I want you to gather information so that you can do a comparison with your use of radio today.

I. In the first segment of your paper I would like you to:

1. Identify the individual by age, sex, ethnic background, and place of residence while they were a youth.

2. Identify what type of programs they listened to and what programs other members of their family listened to (least favorite-most favorite). Identify when (time of day/week) and where they listened to these programs.

3. Identify why they listened to radio - ie. information, persuasion, entertainment, cultural transmission and what gratifications did they receive by listening to the radio.

4. Identify what this individual's parent's attitudes were in regards to having a child listen to the radio.

II. In the second segment of your paper I would like you to interview your parents (or another individual of the same age) concerning the same four questions in segment one.

III. In the third segment of your paper I would like you to discuss your own use of the radio by answering the same four questions in segment one.

IV. In the fourth segment of your paper develop some conclusions about the evolving nature of radio and how audiences and the radio have changed. What economic, social, and political issues have changed the relationship of the radio industry and its audience? What are the challenges that radio will face in the future and what must the radio industry do to survive these challenges?